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SUBJECT: JAPANESE READOUT OF IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN
HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS IN NEW YORK

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)
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11. (C) SUMMARY: Japan was very pleased with the outcomes of both the Iraq and Afghanistan High-Level Meetings held in New York September 22-23. Foreign Minister Nobutaka Machimura (now Chief Cabinet Secretary) decided at the last moment to attend, despite the fact the meetings took place at the same time the next Prime Minister was being selected. On Iraq, Machimura took advantage of the meeting to reemphasize Japan's support for the Maliki government and to stress the important role the United Nations can play in bringing stability to the country. The high points of the visit were Machimura's bilateral meeting with Afghan President Karzai, who reiterated Afghanistan's desire to see Japan remain engaged in the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) Maritime Interdiction Operation (MIO), and the fact that mention of OEF was included in the High-Level Meeting's final communique. Japan's continued involvement in this operation is the subject of a major political debate in Tokyo, so obtaining Karzai's message of support, along with a favorable mention of the operation in the final communique of the meeting, were Machimura's major objectives. The Japanese were extremely appreciative of support from the United States Mission in New York throughout this process. While in New York, Machimura also met with Iranian Foreign Minister Motaki (septel). END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Foreign Minister Machimura, deeply involved in the selection process for the next Prime Minister, decided at the last possible moment to fly to New York to attend the Iraq and Afghanistan High-Level Meetings on the margins of UNGA, according to MOFA Second Middle East Division Principal Deputy Director Motosada Matano. One factor which convinced Machimura of the need to leave Japan despite the ongoing political drama was the government's desire to obtain clear signals of Afghan and international support for Japan's continued involvement in OEF. (NOTE: Japan's participation in the Indian Ocean MIO is the subject of intense political debate in Tokyo and is being used by the opposition party in its attempt to bring down the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. END NOTE.) Machimura arrived back in Tokyo in time to cast his ballot for the next Prime Minister on September 25 and was, on the same day, named Chief Cabinet Secretary in the new cabinet, making him the second highest ranking official in the government after the Prime Minister.

IRAQ

13. (C) Japan utilized Machimura's presence at the Iraq meeting to reemphasize its support at the highest levels for the Maliki government and to stress the importance of continued efforts to achieve national reconciliation, reported Matano. Machimura also spoke of Japan's desire to see the United Nations play a more robust role in bringing peace and stability to Iraq. He recounted Japan's assistance to date, including the deployment of Ground and Air Self Defense Force units and the billions of dollars worth of grants, loans, and debt relief that Tokyo has extended to Baghdad.

AFGHANISTAN

14. (C) Machimura's main reason for making the trip to New York was to ensure that the communique issued following the High-Level Meeting on Afghanistan contained words of support for OEF, and to meet with Afghan President Karzai to elicit from him a positive statement regarding Japan's participation. According to Matano, all Japan wanted from both the communique and Karzai was mention of Operation Enduring Freedom. Machimura believed that this was vital to the government's struggle to beat back the opposition Democratic Party of Japan's efforts to use this issue to precipitate a snap election. The Japanese were therefore very pleased with President Karzai's words of thanks and encouragement.

15. (C) Obtaining the sought-after language in the communique was a more difficult task, related Matano. The Japanese, for

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domestic political reasons, could not be seen as the moving force behind placing words of support for OEF in the communique. Accordingly, they turned to the United States. Matano went out of his way to say several times how appreciative Japan was of the U.S. Mission's efforts to insert the desired language. The problem was that the Iranians were opposed to the language for three reasons. First, they did not want to agree to anything the United States tried to insert, on general principle. Second, they were particularly loath to agreeing to language supporting a military operation close to Iranian shores. And third, in the context of the United Nations, Iran and Japan have become competitors, as both are vying for election by the Asia Group for a nonpermanent seat on the Security Council for the 2009-2010 term.

16. (C) When the Japanese learned the Iranians would be an obstacle, reported Matano, they went to work on Iranian Ambassador to Tokyo, Mohsen Talaei, who telephoned Tehran to explain Japan's point of view and the importance Tokyo attached to this issue for domestic political reasons. Ambassador Talaei relayed to MOFA the morning of September 21 that Tehran would send a message to New York instructing their mission to "cooperate" with the Japanese. This apparently didn't persuade the Iranian mission in New York which, Tokyo learned the evening of the 21st, remained adamant about opposing anything inserted by the United States. When MOFA called Talaei to ask what was happening, he told them the New York mission had replied that they "always cooperated with the Japanese," but that the instruction they received had no clear direction to agree to the language in question. MOFA went back to Ambassador Talaei, whom they had already thanked for his earlier support and so now had a personal stake in the matter. He again intervened with Tehran. FM Motaki, upon arrival in New York, consulted with the Iranian PermRep and together they decided to withdraw their opposition to the OEF language.

17. (C) The Japanese considered the inclusion of language acknowledging OEF to be a major victory. Shedding some light

on intra-MOFA rivalries, Matano explained that the United Nations Policy Division had received the credit for obtaining language acknowledging OEF in Security Council Resolution 1776 which extended the ISAF mission, and that put additional pressure on Second Middle East to come through with something in the High-Level Meeting communique. As a result, Middle East and Africa Bureau Director General Norohiro Okuda was directly involved in every facet of the negotiations and was "very serious" about getting it done.

COMMENT

18. (C) Matano was clearly proud of MOFA's "victory" in obtaining the sought-after language in the communique, and several times expressed gratitude to the United States for the active support given Japan for, what is to them, an extremely important matter.
Schieffer